

# Highland Lake News

Published by the Highland Lake Watershed Association - A Nonprofit Organization Dedicated to the Preservation and Protection of Highland Lake

Winter

2013

## President's Message by Dick Labich



For those of you reading this in sunnier climates, you may or may not be aware of the current financial woes in Winchester. Since this article is written at least 30 days before it is delivered to your home, there could very well be substantial changes during that period, but it is important for all the taxpayers in town to understand what is happening. I will try to summarize the events that occurred in mid-November.

Financial Director Robin Manuele stated the anticipated cash shortfall for the schools on December 31 will be \$1.4 million. The cumulative deficit through January 31, 2014 will be \$2 million. The school board was left with \$1.7 million in unpaid bills at the end of the 2012-2013 fiscal year, June 30, 2013. Superintendent of Schools Thomas Danehy stated he may have to close the three schools in December to pay its bills. Susan Hoffnagle, Chairman of the Board of Education, said the schools could also find themselves in a similar situation at the end of the 2013-2014 fiscal year without new revenues.

The previous Board of Selectmen proposed the Town take out a bank loan, called a grant anticipation note (GAN), for \$2 million since the bank would be repaid by May 15, 2014 when the normal state education payment is due. In order to secure the note, the citizens of Winchester had to approve the loan by referendum (which was held on November 16). The voters approved the application of the loan by a vote of 931 to 243.

The new Board of Selectmen stated they would be in favor of a supplemental tax of three mills to pay all the past due bills. The new Board of Selectmen met after the referendum for the GAN and passed the increase. Although the proposed GAN needs to be approved by the voters, the supplemental tax can be approved by the Board of Selectmen without a referendum of the voters.

What does a three-mill increase mean to the residents of Highland Lake? A simple way to determine your increased tax of three mills is to multiply your assessed value of your house by .003. Unofficial estimates are the increase will average \$594 for residents on East Wakefield Boulevard with a range of \$100 to \$1,782. The folks on West Wakefield will average a tax increase of \$610 with a range of \$97 to \$1,794.

On a different note, this issue of the newsletter contains an article (see page 3) which I first read in the Connecticut Federation of Lakes Fall 2013 newsletter. I asked Terry Platt, our newsletter editor, to seek permission of the writer to reprint the article if she felt it was newsworthy. It was a reprint of an article written by Gregory B. Haldaky and first appeared in the Hartford Advocate. It has to do with the appearance of toxic algae blooms and makes it clear not all algae blooms are toxic. We have been experiencing nontoxic algae blooms in our lake, but so far there hasn't been any record of toxic blooms. However, the article is an early alarm for another potential problem for the waterbodies of the Eastern United States.

I did receive some calls in September regarding this year's drawdown, and I am sure there will be some questions asking when the lake will refill. The water level committee's decision for the targeted four-foot drawdown this

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(continued on next page)

<b>What's Inside</b>	
Water Quality Update .....	3
Home Address Signs and Dock Signs Make Excellent Gifts - and Could Save a Life! .....	4
Highland Lake Nature .....	5
Legacy Program .....	5
Winter Dance Plans .....	5
Membership Services .....	6
Fall Cleanup .....	6
Great Ideas for Christmas Gifts! .....	9
Recipe Corner .....	10

**President's Message (cont.)**

winter, a departure from the normal three-foot drawdown, was intended to provide more exposure to the shoreline for repairs. The drawdown began on November 1 and will end on January 15, 2014. The lake will be allowed to refill back to a three-foot down level at that time and will be maintained as much as possible at that level until the ice is off the entire lake. Then the Public Works Department. will allow the refill of the lake to its usual over-the-spillway level.

The holiday season is upon us, and it reminds me to once again to ask all the HLWA members, before starting out on your holiday shopping, to please consider shopping for your gifts and household decorations in Winsted. We have two of the best hobby shops in the area, two great sports stores, wonderful antique shops, Whiting Mills (which is full of artists and craftsmen), as well as many more merchants who have a great deal to offer. Let's keep our money in town rather than sending it elsewhere. What you spend here stays here and supports the Town, the shop owners and their employees. Remember - *Shop Locally/Buy Locally*, and let's help Winsted this season.

The Board of Directors and I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And may you all stay healthy, wealthy and wise this coming year. God Bless!

**Reminder: To All of My Fellow  
Procrastinators**

Membership dues for 2013-2014 are still on the "to do" list for some of us! Please support the efforts of the HLWA to preserve our beautiful lake and send in your dues **today!**

*Jackie Mulvey, Membership Chair*

***The Lake was a place where you figured things out,  
made sense of your life, and learned to live with yourself;  
all the while humbled by its astounding beauty.***

***You just needed some time at the Lake  
to find out the truth of your own heart  
and to be grateful again for life.***

***--- Paraphrased from the book Pawley's Island by Dorothea Benton Frank***

### Toxic Algae: Another Reason to Worry About Global Warming

by Gregory B. Hladky/Hartford Advocate

(Reprinted with permission by the Hartford Advocate)

It can produce liver and nerve toxins, asthma-like symptoms, severe vomiting and diarrhea; it frequently kills pets; and in rare cases it triggers temporary blindness and even death for humans.

The potentially deadly villain is called "toxic blue-green algae" and can occasionally be found in your favorite lake or pond, as it was last year in Bolton Lake. A new report warns dangerous freshwater "blooms" may be happening more frequently due to global warming.

Yet there is no national system for monitoring these outbreaks. Environmental officials in Connecticut say they really don't know how common toxic algae is in this state because (until just recently) they weren't keeping track.

"We haven't been keeping records or doing monitoring," says Chuck Lee, an environmental analyst with the state's lake management unit for nearly 30 years. He says Connecticut only began checking on toxic algae blooms this past summer, and was the last state in New England to start up a monitoring program.

"I think we need to do more monitoring," Lee says. "I wouldn't want to say [toxic algae outbreaks in Connecticut] are rare... We do have lakes with pretty intense algae blooms that we're concerned about."

This concern isn't something isolated to one body of water in Connecticut. State Department of Energy & Environmental Protection experts say they've been looking at big algae blooms in ponds and lakes that include Lake Lillinonah and Lake Zoar (in the Housatonic River Valley); Candlewood Lake; and Beseck Lake (in Middlefield).

Not all algae blooms are toxic. And those that are don't necessarily make it easy to tell.

A warning on the DEEP's web page explains that blue-green algae occurs naturally in Connecticut freshwater lakes and ponds and most often causes no problems.

The ones that do create toxins that include "microcystin," "anatoxin-a," "cylindrospermopsin," "saxitoxins," and "lipopolysaccharides."

The agency's warning (put up this past July) goes on to list those potentially nasty health effects from swimming in or drinking water from a toxic bloom. And these outbreaks can create an unholy stench for people living nearby.

The toxins can also accumulate in fish that swim through the algae, and get into the people who catch and eat those fish.

"Dogs are especially at risk from exposure to blue-green algae blooms," DEEP officials added, because water-loving pups will drink the toxic stuff or lick it off after going splashing around.

"Assessing the potential health effects from blue-green algae blooms is complicated because...the bloom may not be producing toxins. Therefore, chemical analysis of the water is needed to verify if a blue-green algae bloom is releasing toxins," DEEP's web-page warning states.

And therein lies a big part of the problem.

A report titled "Toxic Algae: Coming Soon to a Lake Near You?" was released last month by the National Wildlife Federation and Resource Media.

In it, experts said it's tough to determine the extent or danger of toxic freshwater blooms because there's no federal agency assigned to track them; few studies have been done on the economic impact of these blue-green baddies; and lots of states have no formal monitoring program.

(The only federal freshwater monitoring program is happening in Lake Erie. The feds do fund toxic outbreak research and testing for marine and coastal areas.)

A list put out by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency shows only 23 states currently have monitoring and testing programs for toxic algae.

This past summer (between May and mid-September), 20 states across the nation reported 147 toxic freshwater blooms.

New York topped the list with 50 toxic algae's occurrences, but the report's experts noted that was probably because New York has one of the best monitoring systems in the nation. Massachusetts reported three outbreaks; New Hampshire, two; and Rhode Island, one.

Lee and Brian Toal, an epidemiologist with the Connecticut Public Health Department, say they saw no reports of toxic blooms in this state this summer. But again, state officials here have only just begun to create a monitoring program, and Connecticut leaves the responsibility for dealing with toxic blooms up to municipal and local health officials.

"We realize there are lakes and ponds that are blooming; we just haven't gotten called about it," says Toal.

The most recent documented toxic bloom in this state happened in Lower Bolton Lake in August 2012. The Eastern Highlands Health District, which covers that portion of northeastern Connecticut, issued a public warning advising people to avoid contact with the lake's water and prevent pets from drinking or playing in the lake.

Robert Miller, health director for the district, says the public advisory was in effect for 7-8 weeks, and wasn't taken down until after the Labor Day weekend. He says the toxic bloom "just

naturally waned and expired on its own," which experts say isn't unusual.

As far as can be determined, the Lower Bolton Lake bloom didn't make any person or animal sick, according to Miller. He says it was the first time he knows about that local and state health officials attempted to cooperate to create a "structured response" to a toxic bloom in Connecticut.

It was that outbreak that prompted Connecticut state officials to put out a detailed 14-page "guideline" for local officials and citizens on how to recognize and deal with toxic algae blooms. Miller says he believes those are "interim guidelines" and that state officials are hoping to create a better monitoring and response system down the line when they have more data.

According to the National Wildlife Federation report, the most serious triggers for these toxic outbreaks is the fertilizer being flushed into streams, rivers, lakes and ponds from farms and suburban lawns. All those excess nutrients create a perfect diet for hungry toxic algae.

All this pollution is being made worse by climate change, according to the report's authors. "Global warming and intensification of major storms and droughts play major roles in the spread of toxic blue-green algae blooms worldwide," said Hans Paerl, a professor of marine and environmental sciences at the University of North Carolina.

"The interesting thing I kind of discovered," Miller says about his first exposure to these hazardous blooms, "is that there's a lot we don't know about toxic algae... about how it exists, and the implications for health and recreation."

Lee agrees. He says that's a major reason why the state has finally begun an initial program to start monitoring some of these inland bodies of water.

"We want to have a better understanding about where we need to be concerned," says Lee.

*"A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature."*  
— Henry David Thoreau

## Home Address Signs and Dock Signs Make Excellent Gifts - and Could Save a Life!

by Dick Labich

You may have already completed your holiday shopping, but it's not too late to add a home address sign or a dock sign to your list - you may just save a life, perhaps your own! The HLWA offers both signs at very reasonable prices.

We have told you how the home address signs prevent first responders from having to search for your home when every second could mean the difference between life and death. In our last issue, I quoted our instructor of the CPR classes we sponsored as saying you could die without an easily seen, reflective sign.

We have told you a Town ordinance requires you have an address sign on your dock. Now it's up to you!

Please note the home address signs come with a post (for \$8) and the necessary hardware (free), and I will deliver them to your home.

If you would like one of these house address signs, a dock sign or the larger green sign, you can call me at 860.738.0167, or you can fill out the following information and mail it with your check payable to the Highland Lake Watershed Association to:

Dick Labich  
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Winsted, CT 06098



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- 4)  I would like to order a metal post.....For each: Add \$8

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## Highland Lake Nature

by Mary Barbro

### You Think You Know About Squirrels?

You probably don't pay much attention to them, just as I didn't. They are just always there living in our yards. Did you know they swim, have mass migrations, are cagey thinkers, and have interesting communication skills? I stumbled upon all this while looking into their shrinking numbers of late. The subject of missing squirrels was coming up in conversation with people throughout the state as well as locally and in newspaper articles. I knew it was true in my own yard since we don't have even one at a time when we used to count ten at a time gathering acorns and nuts. There are people reporting their yards and areas have plenty of squirrels, but so many others do not.



On the DEEP website, I learned throughout history squirrels have been observed to have extensive migrations. One of the more interesting migrations took place in 1933 when 1,000 or more squirrels swam across the Connecticut River between Hartford and Essex. The cause for the migration is not known.

Other reasons could account for their absence as well. Predators may be on the rise. There are abundant hawk sightings, and raccoons, feral cats, snakes, owls and dogs are also predators. Limited acorns last year could have affected this year's population also. I do have a call into the DEEP and some nature centers to see if I can find anything else on this topic.

In the meantime, appreciate the little fellows' interesting talents, whether at your birdfeeder, while communicating around you - using several different squeaks and body positions - or while they are pretending to bury an object if they think they are being observed and all the while they are keeping it in their mouth and burying the hole as if something were really put in there. Their average lifespan is 12.5 years, 20 in captivity, so you might as well make friends. And by the way, if one ever gets stuck in your chimney and you can get to your roof, just send a rope down and it'll climb up.

Other interesting wildlife observations around the lake have been multiple hawk sightings, an eagle swooping down on a hawk to steal its fish, and a sighting of a golden eagle by Terry and Willie Platt. Jean Blair gave me a beautiful picture of one of her many wild turkeys. To them I say, good luck feathered friends and keep your heads down until Thanksgiving is over.

In closing, I hope you will burst out laughing as many times as I have while picturing 1,000 or more squirrels swimming across the Connecticut River. My brother was quick to point out it probably didn't all happen at once but I'm enjoying the vision that way!

## Legacy Program

by Dick Labich

### ***Open space land acquisition to preserve our water quality, scenic views and property values***

I was recently looking through some past issues of the newsletter, and I came across an article I wrote in 2009 after I had seen a painting in my daughter's house at Cape Cod. The significance of the simple four words had struck me at that time as a perfect summation of what the HLWA is all about. When I saw it again, it also reminded me how important the legacy program is for the long-term viability of Highland Lake. It read:

#### ***Respect (because it's fragile)***

It referred to the environment of the Cape, but these four simple words are a perfect summation of the mission of the HLWA. Respect the watershed and lake to make sure they are here for generations to come.

The Legacy program started about that time and has grown very well despite the economic environment. We have closed on more than 30 properties around the lake and are in the process of closing 11 more. These donors are aware of our goals for preservation of the lake but realistically realize the tax benefits that are available for these donations. They also realize open space is necessary to reduce the pollutants that would otherwise enter the lake.

In addition, we have received generous donations of money for the legacy program. It should be noted anyone considering a donation to the legacy program should make out a check payable to the "HLWA Legacy Program" and send it to P.O. Box 1022, Winsted, CT. Before considering any donation to the legacy program, you should consult your tax accountant or financial adviser. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Peacock at 860.738.1941 or me at 860.738.0167.

## Winter Dance Plans

by Terry Platt

Our winter dance will be held on March 1 at Crystal Peak. For a while we thought we would change our venue for the dance, but some people expressed concern as to the reason for the change. So we have heard you and we have made the decision to stay with the Crystal Peak experience. Why change what seems to be working?

As for the theme, we are thinking of a Margaritaville type of extravaganza! Come dressed for a summer party and listen to Jimmy Buffet's kind of music! All sorts of ideas are going through our heads for this, so we think it's going to be a fun experience. Please set aside the date of March 1 for a lot of fun and camaraderie!



## Membership Services

by *Patty Masucci*

Hello all Highland Lake newsletter readers! The membership committee is diligently working on a few activities for 2014. We hope you all come and partake of the fun and goodness we are planning. We will be sending out emails and postcards just to let you know what you are to expect in 2014.

I have joined forces with Whiting Mills and put the Highland Lake items for sale on display at Whiting Mills. You are able to purchase right there on site or you may order directly from me. I will have whatever you order delivered to you in a very short amount of time. We have some new ceramic tiles available to be used as hot plates or on the wall as a decoration. Also, we have mugs and ornaments with lake seasonal pictures and current lake pictures, not like the coasters which have the old postcard designs. So you now have more choices. The six-inch square tiles sell for \$15 each or four for \$50. That represents a savings to you of \$10 per set. The mugs and ornaments are \$10 each or four for \$35, for a savings of \$5 for a set of four.

Look for new activities to come your way. A winter dance is in the planning, plus other activities geared for children. We on the membership services committee want to reach out to all ages of people around Highland Lake. If you have any ideas, please write me a note at [pmasucci@yahoo.com](mailto:pmasucci@yahoo.com) or call 860.379.2303. Thank you so much!!

## Fall Cleanup

by *Patty Masucci*

October 20 was the date for our cleanup at Highland Lake. The weather was not the greatest - nor was it the worst. A little rain the day before made cleaning up a little bit messy. About 25 willing volunteers worked their way around Highland Lake to clean up all the trash thrown out by passers-by. People who use the beaches and the Taylor Brook State Park area really make a mess. Can you believe people would throw a dirty diaper in the woods rather than place it in the receptacle provided at the beach or just bring it home with them? I think this just shows us the type of people who utilize our beaches. I think it is time for an all-out effort to educate the beach population as to the do's and don'ts at Highland Lake. My committee will address this issue at my next membership services meeting. If you have any ideas or would like to help in this education process, please call me at 860.379.2303.

I am always amazed at the number of volunteers who will battle wind and rain to come out to clean the lake. For those of us who volunteered to do this task year-round, please go out before the snow falls, drive around your area, and stop to pick up whatever is lying on top of the leaves.

I believe next year we will change the cleanup date to the beginning of October as the leaves were already falling by the 20th. God bless my wonderful volunteers and the hostess for our luncheon because we do not ever want for anything!! We are well taken care of.

A delightful meal was planned by Jean Labich. And we are always asking each other for recipes. So next spring if you have not volunteered for this task yet, do so!!!

It is a great way to meet your neighbors while helping the lake remain as pristine as it can be. It is our home, so let's pitch in and keep it as nice as can be as a welcome sign for all to see who visit us!!



*Jackie Mulvey and Ray Juros*



*Rusty, Aljean and Bailey Owens and Jan Becker*



*Front row: Mark Blair, Mike Peacock, Jackie Mulvey, Mary Barbro, Sue Peacock, Marlene Rouleau, Sally Fugere, Pat Masucci, Jean Labich, Jan Becker and Aljean Owens. In back: Dick Labich, Ray Juros, Annmarie Janczak, Ray Fugere, Carol Zacchio, Joe Marchell, Don Masucci, Jack Rouleau, Jean Blair, Tony Zacchio and Gene Janczak*



*Tony and Carol Zacchio*



*Dave Frauenhofer*



*Mark and Jean Blair*

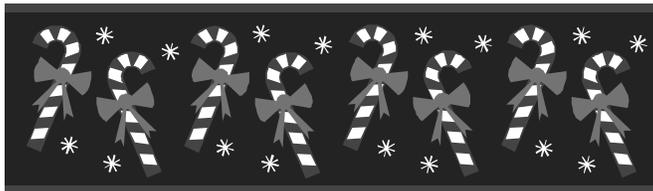
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## Great Ideas for Christmas Gifts!



The Highland Lake Watershed Association has lots of fabulous items that would be perfect to give your friends or loved ones for Christmas. We have mugs, wine glasses, tee shirts, polo shirts, fleece jackets - some displaying a logo of our lake with the words Highland Lake, Winchester, Connecticut - as well as house and dock signs (see page 10), the Reflections Book offered at \$45, and coasters of four vintage pictures of the lake offered at \$27.

Our tee shirts come in various colors, are screen printed, with logos, or lettering - all for \$18 each. Our polo shirts are \$30 each, and our fleece jackets are \$50. Hats with a sailboat or fish or plain lettering are available for \$20 each. Sweatshirts also come in four different styles - logo, lettering left chest, full chest lettering and lake design. Sweatshirts sell for \$35 and \$40 and come in a variety of colors.

We offer pennants to lake members for \$10 each, and pewter Christmas ornaments are being offered again this year. They are handmade and shaped and feature a cut-out outline of the lake. They are signed by James Gagnon, creator, and cost \$40 each.



We have two different style mugs - the 11-oz. white mug with the lake logo on both sides for \$6, or four for \$20; the 13-oz. clear mug with the lake logo on one side and with a gold rim for \$9, or four for \$30. The 11-oz. wineglass has the lake logo on one side and sells for \$7 each, four for \$25, or six for \$36.

Aerial Photography - Pictures of your home on Highland Lake and several overhead views of Highland Lake from different angles are offered at \$40 each, and a second picture purchased at the same time costs \$30. These come with a dark green matting. If so desired, a beautiful framed picture is available for \$179. A vintage 1914 black-and-white framed photo (40" x 11") of the lake is available for \$179. All picture prices are plus tax.

Floating key chains and shopping bags, offered at \$3 each or two for \$5, are great stocking stuffers!



This year we have a few new items to show you! There are trivets with seasonal lake scenes or a wildlife series - \$15 each or a set of four for \$50. You can also order mugs with these scenes at \$10 each or a set of four for \$35. See the website ([hlwa.org](http://hlwa.org)) for pictures.

An ornament with a beautiful scene of Highland Lake in the winter is for sale for \$10 each.

Call Patty Masucci at 860.379.2303.





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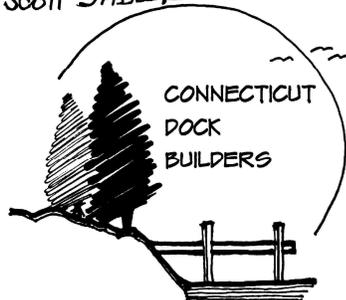
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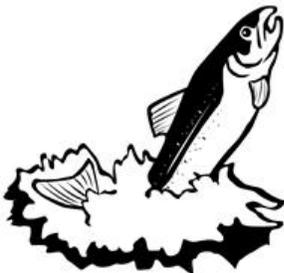
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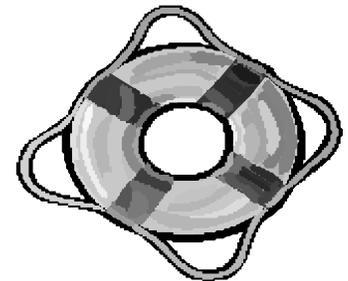
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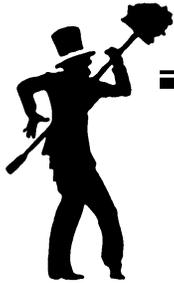
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**HIGHLAND LAKE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION, INC. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

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All owners of land in the Highland Lake watershed are entitled to membership in the Association. Membership dues are \$50.00 and are tax deductible since HLWA is a nonprofit organization. Please make check payable to HLWA.

**Primary Residence**

**Lake Residence**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Voting Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_ Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Correspondence will be mailed to your primary residence unless you indicate otherwise.**

**Areas of interest:**

|                                                        |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> HLWA Board Membership         | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality Testing  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Town Meeting Attendance       | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Preparation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Services Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Computers/Internet     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanup Campaign              | <input type="checkbox"/> Government Relations   |
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(Form also available on website [www.hlwa.org](http://www.hlwa.org))